UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT EASTERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK ORIGINAL

JAN 3 1 2012

BROOKLYN OFFICE

Plaintiff,

-against-

SHIRLEY PETION,

Index No.:

PLANET MOTOR CARS, INC., and TD AUTO FINANCE, LLC

GOLD, M.J.

Defendant.

SUMMONS ISSUED

AS AND FOR HER COMPLAINT, in the above-captioned action, plaintiff SHIRLEY PETION ("Plaintiff"), by and through her attorneys, SADIS & GOLDBERG LLP, alleges as follows:

#### **PARTIES**

- 1. At all times mentioned herein, Plaintiff was and is an individual residing in the County of Kings, 1447 Schenectady Avenue, Brooklyn, New York 11203.
- 2. Upon information and belief, at all times herein mentioned, defendant PLANET MOTOR CARS, INC. ("Dealer"), is a New York Corporation with its principal place of business in the County of Queens at 160-14 Hillside Avenue, Jamaica. NY 11432. Dealer is engaged in the business of selling and servicing new and used motor vehicles.
- 3. Upon information and belief, Defendant TD AUTO FINANCE, LLC ("TD") is a Michigan corporation, and is authorized to transact business in the State of New

York, Kings County. TD is engaged in the business of financing and accepting assignment of automobile finance contracts.

#### JURISDICTION AND VENUE

- 4. Jurisdiction is premised on 15 U.S.C. § 1640(e) and 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1337.
- 5. Plaintiff institutes this action for actual damages, statutory damages, attorneys' fees and costs against Dealer for violations of the Truth in Lending Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1601 et seq. (hereinafter "TILA") and Federal Reserve Board Regulation Z, 12 C.F.R. § 226, promulgated pursuant thereto, and for related and unrelated violations of New York General Business Law § 349.
- 6. Venue in this District is proper in that the conduct complained of occurred here.

### STATUTORY FRAMEWORK TILA

- 7. The Truth in Lending Act ("TILA") is a federal law designed to protect consumers in credit transactions by requiring clear disclosure of key terms of the lending arrangement and all costs. The statute is contained in title I of the Consumer Credit Protection Act, as amended, 15 USC §§ 1601 et seq. The regulations implementing the statute, which are known as "Regulation Z," are codified at 12 CFR Part 226. The purpose of TILA is to promote the informed use of consumer credit by requiring disclosures about its terms and cost.
- 8. The retail installment contract ("RISC") is the document that a consumer receives in which the requisite TILA disclosures are to be made.

#### **BACKGROUND**

- 9. On or about May 30, 2011, Plaintiff went to Dealer to purchase a used car.

  Plaintiff chose a 2008 BMW X5 (the "Vehicle").
- 10. Plaintiff and Dealer agreed upon a price of \$28,000 for the Vehicle, including tax.

  Plaintiff was willing and able to make a down payment of \$10,000.
- 11. Plaintiff agreed to finance the Vehicle and was told that she would receive a rate of 7.49% and that her monthly payments would be \$631.08.
- 12. After Plaintiff complained that the monthly payments would be too high for her to manage, Dealer informed her that if she made the first four payments that her rate would drop to 3.29% and that her monthly payment would be slashed to \$319.82.
- 13. On a piece of paper, Dealer wrote the numbers they had agreed to. A copy of Dealer's notes is attached as **Exhibit A**.
- 14. Plaintiff and Dealer signed a Retail Installment Sale Contract ("RISC"). When Plaintiff saw that the RISC indicated that she was making a down payment of \$15,000, and that the cash price of the vehicle was \$51,109.71 she complained to Dealer that the RISC did not accurately reflect the deal that had been agreed to.
- 15. Dealer told Plaintiff not to worry about the discrepancy in the numbers and that the difference between what had been agreed to and what was reflected in the RISC was only for bookkeeping purposes, was required to get her loan approved, and that the dealer agreed she was only making a down payment of \$10,000.
- 16. Dealer's false reporting of the down payment caused the total vehicle price to be further inflated by \$5,000, and represents a hidden finance charge that should have been disclosed under TILA.

- 17. Dealer's false reporting of the cash price caused the total vehicle price and amount financed to be grossly inflated from \$28,000 to more than \$51,000, and represents a hidden finance charge that should have been disclosed under TILA. A copy of the RISC is attached as **Exhibit B**.
- 18. Dealer also required that Plaintiff make a payment of \$416 to be deposited with the bank. The failure to report this bank deposit payment on the RISC caused Plaintiff to not be properly credited with payments that she made for her purchase, further resulting in inaccurate disclosures in the RISC. A copy of the paper Dealer gave Plaintiff reflecting the bank deposit is attached as **Exhibit C**.
- 19. The Dealer's failure to properly disclose the finance charge denied Plaintiff the opportunity to compare the offered credit terms with alternative terms that she could have obtained elsewhere.
- 20. In another TILA violation, as a result of Dealer's inflation of the sales price, Plaintiff was required to pay additional sales tax based on the higher, inflated sales price.
- 21. This is equally true for the Dealer's reporting of the down payment that caused Plaintiff to pay sales tax on a vehicle that was reported as \$5,000 higher than it really was.
- 22. Further, the additional sales tax on the Vehicle was improperly included as part of the amount financed instead of as part of the finance charge, resulting in an inaccurate disclosure of the annual percentage rate, all in violation of section 1638 of TILA.

- 23. At no time, however, did Plaintiff make a down payment in the amount of \$15,000. In fact, the only down payments Plaintiff made were \$10,000 and \$416. at the time the RISC was executed.
- 24. Thus, Dealer violated TILA by falsely disclosing the amount of Plaintiff's down payment.
- 25. After Plaintiff had made four monthly payments of \$631.08 she began calling

  Dealer to know when she would receive her new payment information. After

  multiple visits and telephone calls to Dealer. Dealer finally delivered to Plaintiff a

  second RISC reflecting the monthly payment of \$319.82 and the interest rate of

  3.29% that Plaintiff and Dealer had agreed to at the time of purchase. A copy of
  the second RISC is attached as Exhibit D.
- 26. Plaintiff contacted TD bank to verify when she was supposed to begin paying the lower amount reflected in the RISC but TD claimed to know nothing about the second RISC and insisted that Plaintiff was still responsible for making monthly payments of \$631.08.

# COUNT I MULTIPLE VIOLATIONS OF THE TRUTH IN LENDING ACT

- 27. Plaintiff repeats the allegations set forth in paragraphs 1-26 as if fully set forth at length herein.
- 28. At all times relevant hereto, Dealer regularly extended or offered to extend consumer credit for which a finance charge is or may be imposed or which, by written agreement, is payable in more than four installments, and is the person to whom the transaction which is the subject of this action is initially payable,

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- making Dealer a creditor within the meaning of TILA, 15 U.S.C. § 1602(f) and Regulation Z § 226.2(a)(17).
- 29. Plaintiff and Dealer entered into a consumer credit transaction which was memorialized in an agreement governed by the TILA, to wit, the RISC annexed as Exhibit B.
- 30. Under the transaction, Dealer failed to deliver all material disclosures required by the TILA and Regulation Z in that Dealer failed to properly and accurately disclose the amount financed in violation of Regulation Z § 226.18(b) and 15 § 1638(a)(2)(A); the finance charge in violation of Regulation Z § 226.4 and 226.18(d) and 15 U.S.C. § 1638(a)(3).
- 31. More particularly, upon information and belief, after the parties contracted for the sale of the Vehicle, Dealer intentionally increased the cash price of the car when preparing the RISC.
- 32. Consequently, the RISC inaccurately discloses the "Amount Financed" for the Vehicle.
- 33. Additionally, by not including the bank deposit of \$416 in the RISC the RISC is inaccurate because it inaccurately discloses the Amount Financed.
- 34. Further, Dealer falsely disclosed that Plaintiff had made a cash down payment of only \$15,000. Dealer made this disclosure with knowledge of its falsity.
- 35. Dealer inflated the purchase price of the vehicle, and the amount of the down payment, in order to be able to assign the installment contract for profit to another lending institution. In the absence of this conduct, the transaction would not have been approved for assignment to another lender.

- 36. As a result of Dealer's inflation of the purchase price, Plaintiff was required to pay additional sales tax based on the higher, inflated purchase price.
- 37. Further, the additional sales tax on the Vehicle was improperly included as part of the amount financed instead of as part of the finance charge, resulting in an inaccurate disclosure of the annual percentage rate, all in violation of section 1638 of TILA.
- 38. Finally, the Dealer essentially admitted that the first RISC was false by delivering a second RISC reflecting the monthly payments and interest rate that Dealer had promised.
- 39. Accordingly, Dealer has violated TILA by providing inaccurate disclosures as to the cash price, the down payment made, the amount financed, the annual percentage rate and the finance charge on the RISC for the Vehicle.
- 40. Plaintiff relied on these inaccurate disclosures to her detriment.
- 41. Plaintiff is therefore entitled to actual damages, statutory damages and punitive damages in an amount not to exceed \$500,000. Plaintiff is also entitled to reasonable attorneys' fees, costs and expenses.

## COUNT II <u>VIOLATION OF GENERAL BUSINESS LAW § 349</u>

- 42. Plaintiff repeats the allegations set forth in paragraphs 1-41 as if fully set forth at length herein.
- 43. New York General Business Law § 349 prohibits the use of deceptive or unfair practices in the conduct of any business, trade or commerce or in the furnishing of any service in New York.

- 44. The conduct alleged herein, and the sale and financing of vehicles is consumeroriented conduct as it has the demonstrated potential to be repeated to other consumers.
- 45. Plaintiff was told that after she made her first four payments her rate would drop from 7.49% to 3.29%, and that her monthly payments would be slashed from \$631.08 to \$319.82.
- 46. Plaintiff and dealer agreed to a purchase price of \$28,000 for the Vehicle.
- Instead, Dealer charged Plaintiff a grossly inflated price and provided a false
   RISC.
- 48. Dealer's actions and practices were misleading in a material respect in that it charged Plaintiff in excess of the amounts it had agreed and then refused to modify the RISC as it had agreed.
- 49. Plaintiff hereby demands that all attorneys' fees, costs and other fees of this action be borne by both Dealer and TD and that the Court award Plaintiff her actual damages, as well as punitive damages in an amount to be determined at trial.

#### COUNT III LIABILITY OF TD AUTO FINANCE, LLC

- 50. Plaintiff incorporates paragraphs 1-49 above by reference herein. This Count is brought against Defendant TD only.
- 51. Federal Law (16 C.F.R. part 433) provides all retail installment contracts contain the following provision:

NOTICE: ANY HOLDER OF THIS CONSUMER CREDIT

CONTRACT IS SUBJECT TO ALL CLAIMS AND DEFENSES

WHICH THE DEBTOR COULD ASSERT AGAINST THE SELLER

OF GOODS OR SERVICES OBTAINED PURSUANT HERETO OR WITH THE PROCEEDS HEREOF. RECOVERY HEREUNDER BY THE DEBTOR SHALL NOT EXCEED AMOUNTS PAID BY THE DEBTOR HEREUNDER.

- 52. TD is the holder of the consumer credit contract memorialized by the RISC for the purchase of Plaintiff's Vehicle. TD is bound by the terms quoted in Paragraph 48 above, subjecting it to all claims and defenses which Plaintiff has asserted against Dealer.
- 53. The Vehicle constitutes the "good" obtained with the proceeds of the RISC.
- 54. Dealer and TD sold the Vehicle which constitutes the good obtained with the proceeds of the loan.
- 55. Consequently, TD is subject to all claims and defenses that Plaintiff could assert against Dealer.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, SHIRLEY PETION, prays for judgment against Dealer and Honda for violations of the Truth In Lending Act, violations of New York General Business Law §349, including a refund of the purchase price plus all finance charges, pre-judgment interest, incidental and consequential damages, punitive damages and attorney fees as follows:

- A. Return of all finance charges and interest;
- B. All incidental and consequential damages incurred by Plaintiff;

- C. Return of all charges over and above the costs of the vehicle as agreed to in the buyer's order, and prejudgment interest at the statutory rate from the date this cause of action accrued;
- D. All reasonable attorneys' fees, witness fees, and all court costs and other fees incurred by the Plaintiff;
- E. An award of punitive damages against Dealer and TD by virtue of their fraudulent conduct; and
- F. Such other and further relief that the Court deems just and proper.

DATED: New York, New York January 26, 2011

Douglas Hirsch, Esq.

David M. Kasell, Esq. (DK-7753)

SADIS & GOLDBERG LLP

Attorneys for Plaintiff

551 Fifth Avenue, 21st Floor

New York, NY 10176

(212) 947-3793

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